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DEVELOPMENT OF HUNTING IN BELARUS

Hunting in the Republic of Belarus has passed a long way. It made first steps in times of the Great Principality of Lithuania. The next steps were taken when the territory of the republic was a part of the Russian Empire and the USSR. Hunting is part of the national economy of the Republic of Belarus now. This fact determines the further possible way of its development.

Hunting tourism is one of the most profitable activities. This kind of tourism plays an important role in the improvement of hunting activity efficiency. The aim of hunting tourism is to increase the financial income from hunters for the provided services. Traditionally foreign tourists are the basis of hunting tourism.

But unfortunately there have been many problems in hunting tourism as well as in the whole system of hunting sector. Inadequate infrastructure of hunting management, insufficient number of game animals in many hunting farms, lack of the required specialists in the republic, lack of advertising and the low level of the personnel training. It all doesn't allow providing hunting for foreign hunters on a proper level. Here we can add undeveloped system of services provided for tourist etc.

The dynamics of the development of hunting tourism gives us the opportunity to suppose that solving this problem in the future will make it possible to significantly increase financial income from hunting tourism. There is objective background for dynamic development of hunting efficiency for enhancing its role in the system of sustainable nature resource management and to meet the needs of our economy and people in the production and services proposed in this field.

Key words: development, hunting tourism, services, efficiency.

Introduction. Hunting sector is an important part of national economy of the Republic. In order to improve the effectiveness of the sector and planning further activities it is necessary to analyze developmental characteristics of this activity in the past and to explore main trends that are observed at the present time. Thus the most profitable hunting activity in the Republic of Belarus is hunting tourism. In hunting tourism today as in the whole hunting sector of the Republic, there are some problems that should be solved.

The main goal of the research is to analyze hunting sector development directions and to formulate proposals for further dynamic development.

Research methods include information gathering about hunting sector and hunting tourism in the Republic of Belarus, evaluation of the results and also practical suggestions.

Main part. It is well known that in Grand Duchy of Lithuania were established special regulations (Statute 1558), that contributed to environment protection, conservation of forests and forest-hunting grounds, and also conservation of most essential fowl species. Thus, the punishment for illegal fowl hunting was very strict.

It is significant that the Statute had remained in force in the territory of Belarus till 1840, in other words during 50 years after becoming a part of Russian Empire. It was recognition of legal principles progressiveness of the Statute of 1588. In general the organization and legal principles of forest

and hunting sector in XVI – first half XIX century were much more advanced than in Russia.

After joining to Russia, Belarusian territory was divided into governorates in the head of which were tsar's governors. In XIX century forest and hunting sector were under feudal system. However with the growth of goods circulation, money economy, emergence of a national market a demand for fur arose. Such situation stimulated development of hunting. At the same time unreasonable kill, deforestation and land tilling led to notable reduction of fur and fowl resources.

Court hunting itself prospered in the European part of Russia as well as in the territory of Belarusian governorates. It was decreed that peasants and private citizens had not have a right for fowl hunting. These edicts didn't apply to tsar's lands and great landowners.

Most valuable insights about hunting sector in the territory of Belarus in XIX century can be found in the notes (that were worked out by Langenfeld) of Hans Aurea, a forester in the Bialowieza forest. It follows thence that in the second part of XIX century economic importance of hunting declined. It became to assume more entertaining features.

Biotechnical measures along with forest fire protection and unauthorized deforestation were initiated. It contributed to the conservation and growth of fowl. Such biotechnical measures included time limit of cattle grazing till 6 month in a year, protection from carnivores like wolf and lynx, enumeration of

wild animals. Forest service included yagers and forest rangers. They were entrusted with the task of fowl protection and participation in permitted hunting. Some floristries were oriented on particular fowl species such as bison, red deer, elks and boars.

In 1802 under the rule of Alexander I a decree was issued giving a status of reserve to the Bialowieza forest that also included preservation of bison. Since 1809 enumeration of bison was conducted. Were created special pastures, also in winter time they were provided with supplementary feeding.

Knowledge about forest hunting areas wasn't profound then. Differentiation by type of hunting areas didn't exist. Experienced yagers knew well where to find particular game animals. Forest fell and influence on regrowth on quantity and reproduction of bison was taken into consideration. In XIX century fur trade between Russia and Western Europe especially Germany, France and England was highly developed. Leipzig market became largest market for fur. Meanwhile significance of Siberian and Russian Far East hunting resources increased, that led to decline of hunting sector in Belarusian governorates. Almost all resources of the most precious fur animals here were exhausted.

An important stage in development of forest and hunting sector in Bialowieza forest was the first forest surveying that was conducted in 1842–1847. Forest area surface was equal to 121.4 thous. ha., 78.5% of which was forested area. Different lands such as farm fields, hay harvest, pastures accounted for 14.4% of the whole territory. Other 7.1% of surface was presented by bogs, waste lands and glades.

During the forest surveying the Bialowieza forest was divided into five forest districts and 666 divisions equal to 2.1336 km. Each forest district included 2 submanager's charge and 12 forest ranges led by rangers and foresters. Each ranger had 77 shooters in a submission which were resettled with their families on the borders of Bialowieza forest.

After the transfer of Bialowieza forest to the local department in 1888, assignments on staff of yagers, killing of carnivorous animals, supplementary feeding in winter time, construction of bird feeders, tracks, look-out towers etc. were increased. Number of cattle also was limited. All this helped to increase the number of bison, red deer, roe deer, fallow deer and boar and besides even though it was beyond the capabilities of food supply. As a result of animal migration epidemics became more frequent: a plague of boar (1908), Siberian plague of red deer (1910–1912). Qualitative features of trophies of the chase decreased. That's all showed that rational hunting sector must base on strict scientific basis.

Russian revolution of 1917 brought drastic changes to forestry and hunting sector organization. Private property and game resources were abolished. Hunting changes were based on the Decree

on hunting (1920), which provided a range of organizational and legal measures. These measures determined development path concerning hunting and hunting sector under the new circumstances. In September 1920 based on the decree, Central Office on Hunting and local hunting departments were established in organizing Narkomzem (People's Commissariat for Agriculture) of the Russian SFSR. Relevant department was established in Belarus within the Central department of forests (CDF) in organizing Narkomzem of BSSR (Belohota; Belorussian hunting department), which had to hold all the necessary work on organizing of hunting sector in the republic.

The hunting department (1920) within the CDF of the People's Commissariat for Agriculture was the first public administration in Belarus. Later CDF was reorganized in the Department of Forestry which included hunting department (Belohota).

It is worth mentioning that 1920s were hard times for Belarusian hunting sector. Years of Civil and World War (1914–1921) caused disasters for national economy and nature. Huge areas of forests were lost, the number of wild animals disappeared such as bison, fallow deer, wild forest cat, gray goose, cormorant. Elk, red deer, roe deer, beaver, wild boar, bear, otter and sable were critically endangered. Capercaillie and grouse became a rarity.

In 1925 Berezinsky reserve was established with a purpose of animal protection and breeding of valuable wild animals, in particular of beaver.

Protection improvement and combat poaching increased the population of game animals including beavers, elks and boars. Berezinsky's beaver was not only preserved but widely spread in other parts of the country.

In pre-war period (1935–1941) in the Berezinsky reserve were invited experienced farmers for raising beavers and elks in captivity. Unfortunately these important works were interrupted by the Great Patriotic War.

After freedom from occupation, in Belarus some actions were taken in order to restore forestry and hunting sector. Protection of wild animals as well as their accounting was organized. Activities on increasing the number of beaver, elk and other species were undertaken. In 1956 Central Administration for Hunting Sector and Reserves attached to the Council of Ministers of the BSSR was established. In 1961 Central Administration for Hunting Sector and Reserves was reintegrated into General Administration of Hunting Sector. Under these conditions concept of complex forest management and wildlife management emerged. That also included rangers involvement in wildlife protection. According to the Decree of Central Committee of Byelorussian Communist party and the Council of Ministers about "Strengthening of nature conservation and

improvement of usage of nature resources in the Republic” from April 24, 1973, governing bodies of forestry and hunting sector were consolidated.

The role of the Hunting Sector Department within the Ministry of Forestry noticeably increased. Its top priority was further development of hunting sector and improvement of hunting methods. In 1978 in the Republic existed two forest-hunting sectors, Bialowieza forest and the Telekhany forestry, 37 forest-hunting sectors of Ministry of Forestry of BSSR, 137 hunting sectors of BSHF (Belarusian society of hunters and fishermen), 22 sectors and 115 local sectors with full-time service, 10 military hunting societies and 3 sectors of “Dinamo” sport club attached to MIA (Ministry of Internal Affairs) of BSSR.

Due to taken economic steps, the number of valuable animal species was re-created. The number of elk and boar was increased, therefore the limits on animal killing was raised to 3–6 thous. of animals. Different regulations concerned wild fauna increased. Forest sectors supplied the State with 450–500 thous. kg of meat products at a cost of 900 thous. rub.

General supervision of hunting sector on the whole territory of the Republic was carried out by the Ministry of Forestry of BSSR and by its local administrative authorities. At the same time control functions were carried out by BSSR State Committee for Nature Protection.

During 1987–1997 hunting management was determined by the Regulation on hunting and hunting sector management in the BSSR no. 115 which was approved by the Council of Ministry of BSSR Regulation from March 31 1987. At the present time there are special rules for hunting sector management no. 580 from December 8 2005 that were approved by the President of the Republic of Belarus and that were drafted by the Presidential decree no. 551 of the Republic of Belarus on December 8 2013.

Hunting tourism is the most profitable activity. Such kind of tourism is an important element of economic activity improvement of hunting sector. The objective of hunting tourism is to increase financial flows and financial currency earnings through services provided to clients in organizing hunting activities. Hunting tourism itself is based on services provided to foreign hunters.

Hunting tourism became accessible for tourists in 1990 when relevant Decree was taken by the Belarusian Government. In recent years foreign hunting tourism is actively developing. Thus in 2000 average income from foreign tourism was 27% from total amount of hunting sector in general and more than 50% in 2012.

Foreign hunters are mostly interested in hoofed animals (bison, elk, red deer and boar) and such

birds as capercaillie and grouse. Italian and Spain hunters are attracted by hunting with gun dogs on game birds such as European partridge, woodcock, grouse and duck. The population of wolf is quite large in the Republic that is why wolf hunting is also of interest for foreign hunters. Today hunting in Belarus attracts lots of countries. Thus in 2000 hunters from Germany, Poland and Benelux countries came to our country for hunting tourism, moreover in last years hunters from Russia, Ukraine and Baltic countries joined them.

In addition to that under the concept of sustainable development of hunting sector in the Republic of Belarus which was approved by the Decree no. 1029 from October 31 2014 of the Council of Ministers, basic principles of hunting sector management and management of animal resources require revision and adjustments.

The main problems of hunting sector development and hunting tourism are:

- complex juridical regulations of hunting sector;
- absence of an effective state system of hunting animals monitoring;
- low density of elk, red deer and European roe deer;
- absence of high-performance protection system of hunting animals;
- significant decrease of the number of boar;
- radionuclide contamination of 4% of the hunting areas of the Republic;
- lack of specialists in a hunting service.

Also a need for hunting sector specialization, inadequate infrastructure, undeveloped range of services, and lack of advertising, low level of professionals in hunting tour organization can be added.

According to the concept, “the main development goal of hunting sector is the creation of conditions for ultimate satisfaction of the customer needs in following: hunting, products of hunting activities and recreation. Also it includes development of foreign hunting tourism by preserving forest areas and increase of its biological diversity by full stimulating of ecological productivity of the wild animals population and improving the effectiveness of hunting sector” [1].

Today in Belarus there are necessary conditions for further development of hunting tourism: “favorable geographical location, opportunities for hunting on rare animals for foreign hunters, attractive prices, newly established hunting infrastructure” [2].

For hunting tourism development first of all it is necessary to organize transport service, then make sure in availability of Belarusian cuisine and dishes using special hunting recipes, taxidermy, leisure activities, sightseeing tours, fishing, lease of sport, touristic and hunting equipment and selling of souvenir products.

Moreover it is necessary to work on promotional activities.

Thus, development of hunting tourism should lead to establishment of necessary forestry infrastructure, increase of valuable game animal species, professional staff training and their further skills enhancement, expansion of services, increase in advertisement and marketing activities and improvement of tour operator performance.

Conclusion. Development of hunting sector was irregular because of external causes. At present time hunting sector has difficulties connected with the

decision of depopulation of boar. As a result we have reduction of attendance of our country by foreign hunters. Nevertheless lots of hunting sectors in Belarus look now for new direction. Thus, in order to increase the population of local wild species (red deer) and to obtain new species for our country (European gazelle), some animals are bought. At the same time there are all prerequisite for hunting tourism and hunting sector dynamic development, enhancing its role in the system of sustainable environmental management, meeting the needs of national economy and people in products of the industry.

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